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Nicaraguan Arms (Cont'd.)

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In his reply to David MacMichael's assertions regarding the lack of credible evidence of a flow of arms from Nicaragua to El Salvador, CIA Public Affairs Director George V. Lauder insists that "intelligence analysts in the CIA and in the rest of the intelligence community disagree with MacMichael" [Free for All, Jan. 11].

Some analysts probably do disagree with MacMichael, but others disagree with Lauder. It would be surprising if that were not the case, for all along the evidence has been, at best, ambiguous. Many intelligence reports in 1981 and 1982, for example, indicated a drastic reduction in the arms flow. I do not have copies of those reports, needless to say, and it would be inappropriate to discuss them in public, but if Lauder doubts their existence, I would be happy to provide him the identifying numbers. He can look them up for himself.

Despite these reports of a reduction, the arms flow was increasing! During the summer of 1982, just as I was leaving the Foreign Service, I discussed this discrepancy with a number of old friends who were analysts in the various agencies that make up the intelligence community. Their response was unanimous: they did not believe the administration's statements were supported by the evidence, and they resented the way in which intelligence was being distorted and misused by the administration for its own purposes.

Lauder would also have us believe that Congress (as a whole) has accepted the validity of the administration's case on the arms flow. But this too is an overstatement. Some congressmen have bought the administration's line; others remain totally unconvinced.

Which brings us to the bottom line of MacMichael's argument—an argument Lauder does not even address: rather than continuing this sterile debate over what "sensitive sources" may have said, why, if it has the irrefutable evidence it claims to have, does the administration not take that evidence to the World Court, present it to the OAS and, most important, to the American people?

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—*Wayne S. Smith*

The writer was chief of the U.S. Interests Section in Havana from 1979 until 1982.

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